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28 April 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: The SRP

SUBJECT : A "Swan Song" Look at the SRP

1. Attached is a not so brief look at the SRP from the hindsight perspective of three and one-half years with the Panel. It is intended for the Panel's internal use as I have not really considered showing or giving it to anyone else. You might want to discuss the paper before I leave you.

2. In any event, it's been great working with you and the fine people we have been blessed with in our office. I shall miss you all more than you realize.

Best of luck!

  
Bruce Palmer, Jr.

Attachment:  
As stated.

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29 April 1982

The Senior Review PanelI. Creation of the Senior Review Panel (SRP)

The concept of having a small group of distinguished senior generalists perform a collegial review function within the national intelligence estimative process is not a new one, the former Board of National Estimates having carried out such a function until it was abolished by DCI Colby in 1973. The idea reemerged during DCI Bush's tenure (January 1976-January 1977) but did not materialize. In November 1978, DCI Turner revived the concept, creating the current Senior Review Panel, and approved its first charter on 16 December 1978. The Select Intelligence Committees of the Congress were officially notified in March 1979 and the Panel was introduced to the NFIB principals at an NFIB meeting on 9 May 1979.

II. SRP Role and the Original Charter 1 November 1978-9 March 1982)

1. The original charter, dated 11 December 1978, is couched in broad terms, providing wide-ranging latitude with respect to Panel functions and activities. The DCI appoints Panel members, but the Panel is placed organizationally with NFAC (DDI). Although it mentions direct tasking of the Panel by the DCI and allows the Panel wide initiative to undertake new projects, the charter makes the Panel responsive to the incumbent in the then double-hatted position of D/NFAC (CIA) and DD/NFA (Community).

2. Essentially the Panel's role envisioned by the charter is to function primarily on the analytical side of intelligence production with the objective of improving the quality and usefulness to policymakers of national intelligence produced by the Community or NFAC (CIA). The Panel operates as a collegial body, unencumbered by allegiance to any particular constituency, and relatively free of bureaucratic and institutional inhibitions. To stress its collegiality, the Panel has functioned without benefit of a chairman. Consistent with this philosophy, the Panel has not been granted any line responsibility or authority, but acts in an off-line advisory capacity. The strength of this arrangement stems from the degree of independence it bestows on the Panel; its main weakness lies in the absence of authority to make the Panel's weight felt.

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3. The SRP functioned under the original charter from 1 November 1978 to 9 March 1982 when DCI Casey in a memorandum for NFIB in effect recast the Panel's role. During this period, the Panel worked with successive Director, NFAC (DDI)\* in two Administrations as follows:

1 Nov 1978-18 Aug 1979: Dr. Robert Bowie (DCI Turner)  
 18 Aug 1979-12 Apr 1981: Mr. Bruce Clarke (DCIs Turner  
 and Casey)  
 12 Apr 1981- 4 Jan 1982: Mr. John McMahon (DCI Casey)  
 4 Jan-9 Mar 1982 : Mr. Robert Gates (DCI Casey)

4. SRP relationships with the D/NFAC were close during most of the above period. The creation of the National Intelligence Council (NIC) on 21 January 1980 caused some disruption of internal NFAC/NIC procedures concerning inter-agency papers, but by March 1980, the "dust" had settled and the Panel's role continued essentially unchanged. The separation of the NIC from NFAC on 24 June 1981 and the reorganization of NFAC on 1 October 1981 again caused some disruption of activities, but did not materially affect the Panel's role.

5.a. The Panel's role was reassessed during the above period (approximately 3 years and 4 months) no less than five times:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Officials Involved</u>
Oct 1979-Mar 1980	DCI Turner, DDCI Carlucci, D/NFAC Clarke, C/NIC Lehman and SRP.
Dec 1980-Feb 1981 (Transition Period)	Special Assistant to the DCI John Bross, DDCI Inman and SRP.
Apr-June 1981	D/NFAC McMahon and SRP.
Jul-Sep 1981	DDCI Inman and SRP.
Jan-Mar 1982	DCI Casey, DDCI Inman, DDI Gates, C/NIC Rowen (replaced Lehman on 6 July 1981), D/IC Staff Koehler, and SRP.

b. The Panel role remained substantially unchanged, however, until the last reassessment in early 1982.

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\* Early in January 1982, NFAC reverted to its former designation as the Intelligence Directorate and the D/NFAC was redesignated as the DDI.

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III. SRP Activities (1 November 1978-9 March 1982)

1. During the cited period, the Panel's principal work can be broken down into roughly six general categories:

- a. Comments on interagency papers during their preparation;
- b. Examinations ("post-mortems") of Intelligence Community performance on specific matters of major interest;
- c. Appraisals of past streams of intelligence reporting;
- d. Reviews of intelligence production planning and suggested intelligence coverage;
- e. Evaluation of NFAC (DDI) production; and
- f. Suggestions on the estimative process.

2. Some measure of the Panel's activities during the period can be gained from the following:

a. Review of On-Going Assessments. On the average, the Panel submitted roughly one hundred memoranda per year (or about twenty-five per quarter) on various NIEs, SNIEs, and IIMs in different stages of preparation. These ran the gamut of individual country and regional assessments, issues of a topical or global nature, and major military estimates that are prepared on a periodic basis. Although this flow of review work fluctuates on a somewhat cyclical basis, the average of 25 SRP memoranda per quarter has held remarkably steady.

b. Post-Mortems of Community Performance.

(1) The Panel completed three major examinations of Intelligence Community performance on specific issues, roughly one major post-mortem per year:

- The Soviet Brigade in Cuba. (Begun in December 1979 and completed in April 1980; covered the period October 1962-November 1979 regarding the Soviet military presence in Cuba).

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- The Soviet ALFA-Class Submarine. (Begun in August 1981 and completed in November 1981; covers the period 1956-1980).
- Soviet Oil Production. (Begun in December 1981 and completed in April 1982, just after the end of the period of SRP activities cited. Covers period 1970-1981.)

(2) At DCI Casey's request, the Panel prepared in October 1981 a summary evaluation of the timeliness, adequacy, and quality of available intelligence support from the Community relating to selected major policy issues that have confronted the Reagan Administration since 20 January 1981, compared with performance during the last two years (1979-80) of the previous Administration.

c. Past Streams of Intelligence Reporting. In addition, the Panel on several occasions analyzed intelligence reporting concerning specific events. Examples are reporting



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d. Review of Production Planning. The Panel prepared several major reviews of production planning forecasts in the 1979-1980 period, but since that time has limited its planning role to making specific ad hoc suggestions for intelligence coverage. Examples of the latter are Soviet military capabilities in situations less than general war (January 1980); intra-regional military balance in the Central American-Caribbean region, 1980-1985; and the need for a larger framework for studying NIEs dealing with the Soviet Union (May 1981).

e. Evaluation of NFAC (DDI) Production.

(1) Between April 1980 and March 1981, the Panel completed an evaluation of NFAC production published during a period of one year. Done at the request of D/NFAC Clarke, Phase I of the study

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entailed a comprehensive survey and quantitative analysis of NFAC's intelligence coverage, while Phase II comprised a qualitative evaluation of that production. The SRP evaluation brought out both strengths and weaknesses in NFAC production, pointing out among other things the need within NFAC for a truly integrative analytical approach to intelligence assessments. The Panel's study was no doubt a significant factor in D/NFAC McMahon's decision to reorganize NFAC on geographic regional lines, as differentiated from functional ones, effective 1 October 1981.

(2) The SRP also made a quick assessment of NFAC production for the month of April 1981 at the request of D/NFAC McMahon.

f. The Estimative Process. The Panel has produced various essays on such subjects as the Importance of Concept Papers in establishing the aim of an estimate and its analytical thrust; and the Theory and Practice of NIEs, SNIEs, and IIMs. On its own initiative the Panel also produced a memorandum, dated 2 April 1981, "SRP Observations on Drafts of Recent Interagency Papers," which outlined general, recurrent (but by no means universal) shortcomings, applicable primarily to nonmilitary papers. DCI Casey commented favorably on this paper in informal, handwritten notes written about 1 June 1981.

g. In addition, individual Panel members were called upon from time to time to do special tasks related to their background or special interest.

#### IV. The SRP Role Under DCI Memorandum for NFIB, 9 March 1982

1. Background. The new "charter" for the SRP was no doubt influenced by many factors. Some of the major ones are briefly described below.

a. DDCI Inman visualized a Community evaluation role for the SRP, in both retrospective and forward looking modes, coupled with a revitalized long range planning and program system to rebuild the Intelligence Community. Admiral Inman sought an SRP-IC Staff relationship but did not want the Panel to become a part of that Staff; rather the Panel would function as a separate entity.

b. DCI Casey apparently favored a retrospective evaluation role for the SRP, having liked the Panel's comparative review (done at his request) of intelligence input into major national security policy issues during the January-October 1981 period of the Reagan Administration as compared to intelligence-policy performance during the last two years of the Carter Administration. Mr. Casey also felt that the Panel played a helpful role in the review of inter-agency papers, having commented favorably on the above cited SRP memorandum, 2 April 1981, addressing recurrent defects in and proposing new drafting guidelines for nonmilitary interagency papers. The DCI also described the Panel's work as "useful" in his 9 March 1982 memorandum already cited.

c. C/NIC Rowen wanted the SRP to continue its review of on-going interagency draft papers, at a minimum examining those considered to be of major importance.

d. DDI Gates recognized the value of SRP review of Community production and performance, but wanted an internal evaluation group of his own for the Intelligence Directorate. Accordingly (in a memorandum to Admiral Inman, dated 5 January 1982) he recommended that the SRP be transferred to the IC Staff or the NIC at the earliest possible time.

e. Since the NIC needs more generalist-type NIOs-at-Large, some members of the NIC viewed the Panel as a possible source for both position "spaces" and personnel "bodies" to fill those spaces. One member of the Panel, Dr. Gordon, personally preferred the NIO-at-Large role and subsequently left the Panel and assumed such a role on the NIC on 19 April 1982.

2. Salient Aspects of Current SRP Role. The salient features of the SRP's current "charter" as articulated in the DCI memorandum of 9 March 1982 are outlined below. Many of them are "new and different."

a. The Panel will be "a separate entity" reporting directly to the DCI and DDCI through the C/NIC. (The Panel's relationship with the NIC is expected to be "close.")

b. The focus of the Panel's activities is "work for the Community":

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(1) The DCI believes that his "most important responsibility is to ensure that the Intelligence Community produces analysis and National Intelligence Estimates that are relevant, timely, and focused on the issues the President and National Security Council must address."

(2) The Panel is expected "to assess how well the Intelligence Community has performed this function on selected topics."

(3) The Panel will also "be available to review terms of reference or other immediate products of the National Intelligence Estimate process."

c. The Panel "will need to work closely with Community managers and their representatives on a cooperative, non-adversarial basis."

d. The Panel "will work with elements of the Intelligence Community Staff which "can suggest topics for consideration by the Panel." The IC Staff will arrange for Community support of the Panel's activities and will monitor implementation of its recommendations. (Although not so stated, the latter is probably intended to apply only to those recommendations approved by competent authority, presumably the DCI or the NFIB. (D/IC Staff Koehler has indicated that the planning element monitoring the "'85 Capabilities Study" will be the group supporting the SRP.)

e. The "organizational arrangement" for the functioning of the Panel will be reviewed at the end of the fiscal year (30 September 1982). (This is pure, standard bureaucratic procedure at its "best." The memorandum does not state who will do the reviewing, but D/IC Staff Koehler, who drafted the memorandum, no doubt intends this responsibility to be his.)

3. On balance, the new "arrangements" not only recast the Panel's role but establish quite a different basis for the Panel's work. Although the new "charter" is not as broad as the original, it presents a distinct opportunity for a fresh start by the Panel, particularly in view of the fact that Mr. McMahon will succeed Admiral Inman. McMahon knows the Panel, is familiar with its capabilities, and believes in putting it to good use. He has the full confidence of the DCI which bodes well for closer relationships with and fuller use of the Panel by the DCI and DDCI.

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V. Findings and Conclusions

1. Having survived two DCI's, two DDCI's, four D/NFAC-DDI's, and two C/NIC's, the SRP apparently has become an accepted element of the CIA, if not the whole Community. This is perhaps an overly optimistic interpretation of the events of the last three and one-half years. A less charitable conclusion might be that the DCI has found the Panel to be a useful counter to external pressure to develop ways of improving the quality of analysis.

2. The Panel's current off-line, advisory role (under both original and new "charters") gives senior intelligence officials wide latitude in making use of the Panel since line managers have little incentive to take the Panel's views and recommendations seriously. Moreover, in their external relations, senior intelligence officials can point to the Panel as an "outside," unbiased evaluation group that can definitely enhance the objectivity, balance, adequacy, and policy usefulness of national intelligence. (This latter aspect feeds the suspicion that the Panel has been maintained as much for cosmetic purposes as for substantive reasons.)

3. The CIA has been slow, cautious, and at times procrastinating in making use of the Panel, especially in a Community role. Numerous reassessments, some extending over months, of the Panel's role have not been helpful from the Panel's point of view. Although the Panel continued to function meaningfully, this situation has stifled Panel initiative, confused relationships and roles within CIA, and was not conducive to making progress. In sum, the Panel's potential has not been exploited to the maximum. On the other hand, the Panel can probably be properly criticized for not being sufficiently aggressive in taking the initiative to clarify its role and define the scope of its work. It can be argued that these matters are not up to the Panel to decide. Nevertheless the Panel can also be faulted for not making its case more persuasively.

4. The Panel should reconsider its policy of not designating a chairman. Although this policy enhances collegiality, it has some weaknesses. It dilutes responsibility; there is no one "in charge." The Panel's collegiality can be circumvented by direct dealings with Panel members as individuals who nonetheless remain cloaked as Panel representatives. Having a Panel chairman might avoid such problems and result in better forward planning and a surer sense of direction on the part of the Panel. To avoid

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protocol sensitivities, the Panel could decide to have the member with longest tenure with the Panel automatically act as its chairman. The alternative would be to rotate the chairman among the Panel members.

5. The Panel has properly sought to balance its work so that it is not only on-going and forward-looking, but also retrospective in nature. This balance should be continued.

6. One major gap stands out in the use of the Panel. It has not been involved in policy support activities requiring intelligence input except in a very informal way. It has, however, made a comparative analysis of such policy support, comparing Community performance during the period 20 January-1 October 1981 with that for the 1979-80 period in the previous Administration. This is an area which the Panel might consider exploring with the DDCI with a view to Panel participation at least on selected policy issues. In any event, except for extremely sensitive matters, the Panel should be on the distribution list of typescripts.

7. In more recent times, the Panel has not been as involved as it was in the past in NFAC/DDI production planning. The Panel should probably continue to avoid participating in the managerial aspects of such one-agency planning, but on a Community-wide basis, remain alert for apparent gaps, undue overlap or duplication, or lack of interagency coordination in intelligence coverage of a significant nature. In this connection, should the Panel seek an ombudsman role on behalf of the DCI, or the Intelligence Community as a whole, or the consumer-policymaker community? For example, in the case of Soviet oil production assessments, should the Panel have stepped in as an ombudsman sometime during the 1977-79 period and sought to mediate the CIA-DIA squabble, or at least brought the matter forcefully to the DCI's personal attention? In any event, the Panel should establish and maintain liaison with the Intelligence Producers Council, composed of NFIB representatives with major responsibilities in production and chaired by an individual designated by the DDI.

#### 8. SRP Prospects

a. SRP should expect a bright and busy future with the Casey-McMahon team. The Panel may now be in a position to be more forthcoming in specific proposals or initiatives with respect to its activities in the future.

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b. The Panel should take the initiative with respect to its new mandate under the DCI's 9 March 1982 directive entitled "Senior Review Panel." Specifically, this means (1) periodically contacting "Community managers" (individually or collectively) to discuss broader perspectives concerning their respective areas of responsibility and determine what current or potential problems are worrying them; (2) contacting the D/IC Staff and his staff element charged with SRP support to discuss the modalities of such support and exchange views as to appropriate topics the Panel might address; and (3) drawing up a prospective list of possible projects for the next 6-18 months for further discussion with C/NIC Rowen, DDCI McMahon, and possibly D/IC Staff Koehler.

c. Eventually, the Panel should at least attempt to block out possible rough work plan(s) for 6 to 18 months in the future. Plans should be flexible and indicate alternative projects, and should take into account "projects of opportunity" that may arise without much advance notice.

d. A listing of candidate projects is attached.

  
Bruce Palmer, Jr.

Attachment

### Candidate Projects for SRP

1. Anticipatory Planning. There seems to be a lull in interagency papers being undertaken at the moment. Does this mean that the Administration is preoccupied with domestic political and economic affairs (off year elections of November '82), or that the Intelligence Community is "catching up" with the policy demand, or both? Or is this a lull before the storm? The Panel might consider drawing up a list of major issues requiring research and analysis in two groupings: (1) those are sure to arise in the shorter term; and (2) those on the horizon that might become urgent over the longer term. An example of No. 2 might be a longer range strategic analysis of Central America and the Caribbean-political, economic, military, sociological, and psychological.

2. Capstone Estimates. The Panel might want to explore in depth Community planning and capabilities for capstone estimates that integrate bits and pieces, as well as building block-type assessments. An example is a true capstone estimate of the Soviet Union.

### 3. Retrospective Evaluation

a. An examination of the Community performance in support of selected major policy issues over the period 15 November 1981-15 November 1982.

b. An across-the-board evaluation of Community production over a specific period of time (similar to SRP's NFAC evaluation).

c. A similar evaluation of Community performance with respect to a specific region or broad topic.

d. An examination of Community performance with respect to estimates on Soviet development of directed energy weapons.

e. An examination of selected past estimates on major policy issues that would (1) assess their value to the policymaker on the "real world" operative policy issue(s); and (2) suggest how those estimates might have been improved at the time, given the information then available.

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f. An examination of the flow to policymakers of intelligence emanating from various specific elements of the Community (DDO, DDI, NSA, DIA, INR, etc.) on a specific subject with a view to assessing the effect in toto on policymakers, determining the degree of coordination (or lack thereof) among the intelligence elements involved, and weighing lessons that might be learned from that particular experience.

3. An evaluation of the validity of current methodologies used within the Community to determine Soviet defense expenditures--rubles and dollars.

4. An evaluation of the current collection effort against a specific major target.

5. A comparison of the flow of intelligence on a specific region or issue going to the State Department with that going to the Defense Department and CIA.

6. At the appropriate time, an examination of the DDI since the 1 October 1981 reorganization to assess the degree to which the goals of that reorganization are being met.

7. Mr. John McMahon's list of "Possible SRP Projects" dated 6 November 1981 and his internal NFAC memorandum of 12 November 1981 (NFAC #7292), Subject: Senior Review Panel Projects.

SUBJECT: The Senior Review Panel, dated 29 April 1982

SRP/BP:tb

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